



**Testimony
Betsy Gara
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Connecticut Council of Small Towns
Before the Appropriations Committee
March 22, 2013**

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) **urges lawmakers to reject HB-6353** which authorizes the governor to rescind municipal aid by up to 5% - without legislative approval.

Cutting state aid to towns and cities will simply shift the burden onto the backs of local property taxpayers, undermining local economies and compromising the ability of towns to deliver critical services.

State aid to municipalities has been largely flat funded for more than a decade, requiring towns to fund a larger portion of education and other programs from property tax revenues. As a result, town budgets are under enormous strain because the cost of providing education, public safety and other critical services has increased every year, despite efforts to control costs on the local level.

Towns need to rely on the amount of state aid that is approved by lawmakers and signed into law by the governor in order to effectively manage budgets, personnel and services. Mid-year cuts of up to 5% - an estimated \$149 million per year – would devastate towns and disrupt the delivery of critical services to our residents. This proposal would allow deep budget cuts to hang over our towns like the Sword of Damocles.

COST urges lawmakers to **reject HB-6353**.

COST is an advocacy organization committed to giving small towns a strong voice in the legislative process. Its members are Connecticut towns with populations of less than 30,000. COST champions the major policy needs and concerns of Connecticut's suburban and rural towns.